

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **2-A**WASHINGTON TIMES
28 October 1985**FILE ONLY**

Hostage families will ask Reagan to increase effort

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

President Reagan is scheduled to meet today with relatives of the American hostages in Lebanon, who will press for "an immediate re-evaluation" of government efforts to free their loved ones, the families said Sunday.

"When the president learned that the families would be together in Washington and of their interest in seeing him, he directed his staff to invite them to the White House," White House spokesman Mark Weinberg said yesterday.

"The meeting will provide an opportunity for the president to bring the families up to date on our ongoing efforts to secure the release of their relatives," he said.

The meeting will be the first group session

The discussions come at a time of uncertainty and apprehension in the drama in Beirut.

Mr. Reagan has held with relatives of at least three of the six Americans still missing in Beirut.

The families, along with several former hostages, are in Washington for two days of discussions with congressional leaders. Before the White House visit, the families are expected to meet with Lebanese and Syrian officials.

The discussions between the families and Mr. Reagan come at a time of uncertainty and apprehension in the long-running drama in Beirut, heightened by recent violence that has jolted attempts to energize the Middle East peace process.

On Oct. 4, Islamic extremists reported they had killed one of the six Americans, William Buckley, and later distributed a photograph that purported to show his body. U.S. officials said the quality of the photo was too poor for

a positive identification. No body has been found.

At the time, the statement by the fundamentalist group Islamic Jihad said Mr. Buckley, 57, the only U.S. government official among the hostages, had been tried and found guilty of being the CIA station chief in Beirut and was killed in retaliation for the Israeli air strike on Palestine Liberation Organization headquarters in Tunisia.

The families, who have formed the American Hostage Committee, said in a statement yesterday that the group "strongly believes that the crisis nature of the hostage situation has grown ever more serious in the wake of the recent events in the region."

"The possible execution of William Buckley," the committee added, "demands an immediate re-evaluation of the government's policies in the matter."

The situation has been further clouded by the fallout from the hijacking of the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro by four Palestinian gunmen and dramatic efforts by the United States — designed to underscore Mr. Reagan's hard line against terrorism — to bring them to justice.

On the eve of the meeting with Reagan, U.N. Ambassador Vernon Walters said behind-the-scenes efforts to free the hostages — some involving possible mediation by Syrian President Hafez Assad — continue.

Mr. Walters, interviewed on the NBC News program "Meet the Press," confirmed he discussed the issue with Mr. Assad during a secret mission to Damascus last month and on previous occasions and said, "I think he is sensitive to our concerns."

"I'm hopeful he will do something to obtain the release of those hostages," Mr. Walters said.

Among those expected to meet with Reagan are relatives of Terry Anderson, an Associated Press reporter; Peter Kilburn, the librarian at American University in Beirut; the Rev. Martin Jenco, a Roman Catholic missionary; and David Jacobsen, administrator of the American University Hospital.